

# VX

April 2004

## **Fact Sheet** *for residents of Southern Benton County*

Environmental Health Division  
Office of Environmental Health Assessments



VX is called a nerve agent. It is similar to the insecticides Malathion and Parathion. VX is an odorless, colorless liquid with the consistency of lightweight motor oil.

### ***How can you be exposed to VX after an accident at the depot?***

In the unlikely event of an accident, Washington residents could be exposed to VX by breathing vapors released during the accident.

### ***What are the effects of exposure to VX?***

VX affects the nerves and causes over-stimulation of nerves, muscles, and glands.

Exposure to a small amount of vapor can cause pin point pupils, dim or blurred vision, eye pain, a runny nose, and shortness of breath. Symptoms are seen alone or in any combination.

Moderate exposure can cause muscle weakness, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Exposure to large amounts of VX can cause interruption of breathing muscle weakness, loss of consciousness, convulsions, and death.

### ***How long will it take symptoms to appear after exposure to VX vapor?***

Effects usually appear seconds to minutes after breathing nerve agent vapor.

With exposure to very small amounts of vapor, pin point pupils may be the only effect and may take an hour to appear.

### ***What medical treatment will I receive after exposure to VX?***

You will not need treatment if pin point pupils are your only symptom. However, if you are exposed to a larger dose and have a runny nose, difficulty breathing, or nausea and vomiting, then you can be given antidotes.

Two antidotes are available to treat exposure to VX. The antidotes are atropine and pralidoxime.

### ***How are the antidotes given?***

Paramedics and emergency medical technicians can give antidotes quickly and easily by using automatic injectors (autoinjectors). They will usually give you an injection in the upper thigh.

***Will you need to be decontaminated?***

In some cases evacuating residents who have been exposed to VX will need to be decontaminated. People can be decontaminated with soap and water.

***Who will provide medical treatment and decontaminate residents as they evacuate?***

Fire department personnel with special medical training will provide medical aid. Medical screening and treatment will be available at first aid areas along evacuation routes.

If necessary, fire department personnel will also decontaminate you. Portable showers will be set up in special tents with heaters. You will find the showers at first aid areas. Decontamination equipment will also be located at hospitals in the Tri-cities and Prosser and at reception centers for evacuees.

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**If you have more questions you can call Mike Harris at Benton County Emergency Management (1-800-841-7953), or Koenraad Mariën at the Washington Department of Health 1-877-485-7316 (toll free).**